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## Viewing cable 08NICOSIA910, CYPRUS: ROC CONDEMNS TURKISH NAVY HARASSMENT IN

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">08NICOSIA910</a>	<a href="#">2008-11-18 14:16</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Nicosia</a>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000910

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/RPM, L/EUR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [EPET](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: CYPRUS: ROC CONDEMNS TURKISH NAVY HARASSMENT IN ITS EEZ

REF: A. URBANCIC-FITZPATRICK EMAIL OF 11/14/08

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1986

Classified By: Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (U) This cable contains an action request -- please see Paragraph 9.

12. (C) SUMMARY: The Cypriot Foreign Ministry on November 14 summoned the Ambassador to protest Turkey's alleged same-day harassment of two RoC-contracted vessels conducting seismic exploration in waters Cyprus considers part of its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). MFA Permanent Secretary Nicolas Emiliou made no specific request of the Ambassador during the 20-minute meeting, but, "given your relationship with Turkey," implied the USG should caution Ankara that such behavior was unacceptable. The Ministry intended to summon ambassadors from the other P-5 nations to conduct similar briefings later in the evening, he added. On November 15, the UK High Commissioner in Nicosia informed the Embassy that London was prepared to demarche Ankara and even issue a public statement in support of the RoC maritime claims. Turkish and T/C contacts long have warned the GoT would take steps to prevent RoC-sponsored mineral exploration as long as the Cyprus Problem remained unsettled. END SUMMARY.

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You Must Come...Urgently  
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13. (C) MFA Permanent Secretary (D-equivalent) Nicolas Emiliou urgently summoned the Ambassador the afternoon of November 14 (Ref A). In his usual somber tone, the MFA diplomat informed that there had been an incident hours earlier off the southwest coast of Cyprus. There, two scientific vessels, respectively flying Panamanian and Sierra Leonian flags, were conducting seismic research on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus. They were approached by one or two Turkish Navy ships and, under orders to depart the area or otherwise face unspecified but serious consequences, eventually retreated into RoC territorial waters. "The act represented the culmination of provocative Turkish behavior that had commenced when Cyprus signed a maritime delimitation agreement with Lebanon, but was the first time Turkey directly interfered with ongoing Cypriot activities," Emiliou asserted. Other recent provocations included Turkish live-fire military exercises in 2007 just outside RoC territorial waters that endangered civilian maritime and air traffic.

14. (C) A signatory to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Republic of Cyprus had rights to resource exploration and exploitation in its EEZ, Emiliou continued (Ref B). The incident had occurred well within its exclusive zone, only 27 nautical miles off the island. Turkey maintained its own maritime claims that far exceeded those stipulated in the UN convention, however, and was aggressively arguing the spot in question lay on its continental shelf. Emiliou noted that the Turkish MFA website carried thinly-veiled threats warning Cyprus not to survey in the area. Further, on October 8 the Turkish Navy had warned Cyprus directly to halt exploration activities (NFI). Turning again to the November 14 incident, the GoT vessels had further violated international law by not identifying themselves, the MFA diplomat alleged. One had gotten close enough to the research ships to show its hull number -- F927. The Turkish captain had threatened (presumably by radio) unspecified action should the civilian vessels not retract their equipment and depart the area, Emiliou continued. They did, and retreated to RoC territorial waters. (Note: DoD sources were unable to place the Turkish naval vessel "F927" in the area on November 13/14. The frigate F240 was off the southeast coast of Cyprus shortly beforehand, however, and conceivably could have steamed westward to intercept the exploration vessels.)

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High-level Instructions to Engage  
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15. (C) RoC President Demetris Christofias himself had ordered the MFA to demarche UN P-5 embassies immediately upon word of the incident, Emiliou noted. The U.S. was first in

NICOSIA 00000910 002.3 OF 002

line, owing to its close relationship with Ankara. "We know you support Turkey's eventual European Union accession," he continued, "and this is unacceptable behavior for an aspiring EU state." Cyprus recently had felt pressure to "show more understanding" on opening additional EU Acquis chapters, specifically Energy. Yet acts of aggression like this incident were exactly the reason the RoC was blocking -- and would continue to oppose -- green-lighting those negotiations.

16. (C) President Christofias had no intention of allowing the maritime incident to derail current Cyprus Problem negotiations with Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, Emiliou assured. Clearly, however, this type of unwarranted aggression did not contribute to a constructive environment for the talks. "We believe your assistance here is vital," Emiliou concluded.

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Others Get Involved  
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17. (C) On November 15, resident UK High Commissioner Peter Millett contacted the Ambassador to relay London's latest thinking on the dispute. As a fellow UNCLOS signatory which sided with Cyprus in this EEZ dispute, HMG was prepared to demarche the Turks in Ankara, Millett relayed. It also stood ready to voice public support for Cyprus's right to exploit its economic zone, although it would not state specifically where exactly the EEZ lay. Further, the UK did not countenance Turkey's claims that all eastern Mediterranean littoral states potentially had rights in the disputed area, making a multilateral delimitation imperative. (Note: separate reporting from London indicated the Brits would take a soft line with the Turks -- watching developments and urging restraint -- while the French, at London's behest, would push harder. Highlighting Paris's talking points was an admonition that Turkey's saber-rattling over maritime resource exploitation could not come at a worse time for its own EU accession path and the still-nascent Cyprus negotiations.)

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Comment and Action Request  
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18. (C) With both sides having drawn their lines in deepest red, the November 14 incident comes as no great shock. Turkish Cypriot "officialdom" and resident Turkish "Embassy" contacts long have reported that any attempt by the Republic of Cyprus to exploit mineral resources in "contested" waters would be opposed, with force if necessary. Conversely, Greek Cypriots vehemently contend they have law on their side, stemming from the RoC's accession to UNCLOS, their successful negotiation of delimitation agreements with Egypt and Lebanon (although Beirut has yet to ratify the latter), and public support from powers like the United States. On the related issue of the Energy chapter of the EU Acquis, the RoC has shown no intention to budge until Ankara backs down on maritime exploration and exploitation.

19. (C) We recommend that the U.S. take the middle ground, urging restraint and dialogue and cautioning the sides to compartmentalize the dispute to prevent it from harming the Cyprus talks. Longer-term, however, we will need Department guidance on balancing the Republic of Cyprus's EEZ claims with those of Turkey. A Houston-based, midsize oil and gas firm already has won a 2007 RoC tender to explore for oil and gas in a bloc to Cyprus's southeast, and likely will be conducting additional seismic testing in the spring. Last week in Las Vegas, the RoC announced the opening of bidding

for a dozen additional offshore blocs, some of which hold great promise (Ref C). We expect the company will request the USG to defend its commercial interests in the disputed waters. ACTION REQUEST: 1) Language we can supply to the RoC as the official view on the status of its EEZ, even if the U.S. view is that some of the waters are in dispute. We propose to deliver that language to the RoC as an aide memoire. 2) The guidance should also take into account the likelihood that U.S. companies may request USG assistance in defending their commercial interests in these areas.

Urbancic